

Laura Jones.
After René Magritte's Musings of a Solitary Walker

MAN
MOTHER
GIRL

(Down Stage GIRL sits on the ground. She holds a wind chime. Behind her stand MAN and MOTHER. There is a chair.)

I want you. **MOTHER**

Not now. **MAN**

She's gone. **MOTHER**

I smell her. **MAN**

Maybe you want her instead of me. **MOTHER**

I don't want anyone now. **MAN**

If you touch her. **MOTHER**

I don't want her. **MAN**

She is venomous. **MOTHER**

MAN

She's your child.

MOTHER

I want to go search for her.

MAN

Why?

MOTHER

To punish her.

MAN

That's cruel.

MOTHER

It is an instinct.

MAN

Instincts can be cruel.

MOTHER

It's only cruel if one of us doesn't enjoy it.

MAN

Do you think she is in the forest again?

MOTHER

Of course.

MAN

Should I come after you if you're gone too long?

MOTHER

No.

MAN

Will we ever be alone together?

MOTHER

I hope not.

(Pause.)

I'm going now.

MAN

I can't sleep in this house.

MOTHER

No one can.

(Exit MAN and MOTHER)

(A forest. GIRL sits on the ground, her knees against her chest. She watches the wind chime. It clangs gently.)

GIRL

The water is angry. The water is a cold womb that will swallow us. The water is a cold, dark womb that hates us and will devour us.

(She rattles the wind chime.)

MOTHER

Why are you here?

GIRL

I'm hiding from you.

MOTHER

But you can't.

GIRL

I know.

MOTHER

Then stop running away.

GIRL

I can't help it.

MOTHER

Get up.

GIRL

No.

MOTHER

I should let you die here.

GIRL

Then let me die here.

MOTHER

It's cold and wet.

GIRL

I like it.

MOTHER

The water looks angry tonight.

GIRL

Do you want to drown me?

MOTHER

I imagine it. I am stronger than you. It wouldn't be that difficult.

GIRL

Why haven't you killed me yet?

MOTHER

I want to torture you first.

GIRL

Why am I your only prey?

MOTHER

Because I love you more than anyone else.

GIRL

Even more than the man who never pretends to be my father?

MOTHER

Of course.

GIRL

Fine. Then you can kill me. So long as it is out of love for me.

MOTHER

Why do you come here?

GIRL

To be away from you.

MOTHER

It's so dark. How do you find your way home when it's so dark?

GIRL

I wait until my nightmares take me home.

MOTHER

You sleepwalk.

GIRL

Yes. And my dreams always send me back to bed, screaming.
But how will you make it home?

MOTHER

I'll follow you.

GIRL

I'll run.

MOTHER

I'll run after you.

GIRL

I will run faster than you. You'll lose me in the dark. And then you will be alone. And you will be very afraid. And I will run even faster.

MOTHER

You won't leave your mother in this evil forest.

GIRL

I will leave my mother all alone. And she will have to go find a new daughter. Because I will be far away and happy. And she will come to understand that of all the evil things in this forest, she is the most terrifying.

MOTHER

Liar.

GIRL

Almost. There is a man. He watches me sleep and he watches my dreams. To him, this forest is a theater. He comes here. Here to this very place, just to watch my nightmares.

MOTHER

Do you know the man?

GIRL

He changes every time. But he is very much like the man you sleep with.

MOTHER

Does he hurt you?

GIRL

He barely notices me.

MOTHER

Protect me!

GIRL

Mother, I want to sleep.

MOTHER

I won't let you sleep.

GIRL

I must.

MOTHER

I won't let you dream.

GIRL

Then how will you return home?

MOTHER

I won't forgive you. I won't forgive you for your nightmares.

GIRL

I hope you die in this forest.

MOTHER

(Grabs GIRL's hair and pulls it hard. Their faces are very close.)
Wicked child.

(MOTHER releases GIRL. GIRL slumps to the floor. She falls asleep in the fetal position. MOTHER lies down beside her, her body cupping GIRL's body. MOTHER strokes GIRL's bare arm and face. MOTHER hums. They stay like this for as long as possible. The sound of a drum. Slow. Soft at first, and then louder. Stop. MAN enters. Walks across the stage and sits in the chair that is behind the women. There is distance between him and GIRL and MOTHER. He watches silently, with great interest. GIRL wakes up. She begins to shake.)

GIRL

Your touch! Your touch!
(Scratches her body and face violently)
Feed me to the water. Eat me, river.
(GIRL throws herself into the river. Her body thrashes. She drowns. She lies face down on the stage. Several moments pass. MOTHER wakes up.)

MOTHER

Where are you? Monster! Am I alone?
(Finds her dead daughter. Kneels.)
Angry water in the womb. Angry water. Angry water.
(Picks up the wind chime. Shakes it hard.)
Help! Help!